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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS



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BILL J. SAMS
DIRECTOR

PALMETTO VETS GAZETTE

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STATE DOCUMENTS

"FROM THE DIRECTOR'S DESK"

The new State Veterans Nursing Home that began as a dream is now becoming a reality as groundbreaking was held on November 2, 1988. The steel skeleton of the 130,000 square foot building is presently going up on a beautiful site along the Belton Highway near the Patrick Harris Psychiatric Hospital.

This 223-bed facility will provide 24-hour care for our veterans and is expected to be completed in July of 1990.

Mr. Goldbar, Construction Manager, described the nursing home design as "high tech" and unique. Each room will have the latest medical equipment possible, including oxygen tanks. Although the nursing home is basically a medical facility, it has some "at home" touches, such as a courtyard in the center of all of the buildings where the veterans can sit and talk, as well as a physical activity center.

This magnificent facility represents a lot of hard work by many people. Not only will the home benefit the much deserving veterans from our great State, it will benefit the State as a whole. In addition to jobs that the home will provide, it will also help other businesses.

We are excited about this new facility and look forward to the doors opening next year to provide a service that is much needed for our aging veterans.

US DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EXPENDITURES

The USDVA has recently released information on VA spending in South Carolina for Fiscal Year 1988. The following list details VA's expenditures by Congressional District for the fiscal year which ended September 30, 1988. A detailed breakdown by county and category is available on request.

District 1	\$ 100,944,766
District 2	124,197,837
District 3	41,720,277
District 4	38,253,694
District 5	40,017,304
District 6	<u>43,694,577</u>
South Carolina Total	\$ 388,828,455

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS NEWS

June 30, 1989, was a dark day for this Agency as one of our "stalwarts" decided to start a most deserved and well earned retirement. Robert A. Smith had been a Claims Representative with this Agency since February 1978 and had done a superlative job. His accomplishments are just too numerous to mention here but if one phrase can be used, it would be "Steady in Purpose". Robert will be sorely missed by all of us. We wish for him and his bride, Ivy, a happy, healthy and prosperous retirement.

SERVICE ORGANIZATIONS NEWS

Several of the major service organizations have recently held election of officers. The new Department Commanders and Adjutants are listed below:

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Commander</i>	<i>Adjutant</i>
American Legion	Wayne B. Richey	Bernard L. Black
AMVETS	Gene Hewitt	Dick Webster
Disabled American Veterans	Fred G. Strohm	Reuben C. Ferguson
Veterans of Foreign Wars	George M. Pullie	David L. Hutto
Vietnam Veterans of America	Richard LaBarre	Mel Baker

BEAUFORT INTERS CIVIL WAR REMAINS

The reburial of remains of members of an all-black Civil War regiment was the inspiration for the 1989 Beaufort, S. C., National Cemetery Memorial Day celebration May 29.

The ceremony preceded the reinterment of the remains of 19 men from the 55th Massachusetts Volunteer Infantry Regiment. It is very likely that these young men were freed slaves fighting under the Union flag.

The cemetery hosted a ceremonial "burial service" with the 19 caskets for the program, and performed the actual interments the next day. These remains joined those of at least 7,500 other Union soldiers buried at Beaufort, some of whom also fought in the 55th Massachusetts Regiment. Approximately one third of the gravesites at Beaufort hold the remains of black soldiers.

A Massachusetts delegation, including Governor and former presidential contender Michael Dukakis, attended. The Governor presented battle flags with the 55th Regiment's colors to reenactors. Cast members of a new movie about the Civil War staged reenactments and served as pallbearers for the simulated reburial.

Preparation for the reburial began more than two years ago when construction workers operating a bulldozer in Folly Island, about 40 miles northeast of Beaufort, first discovered the soldiers' remains.

The University of South Carolina archaeology department identified the remains as those of the Civil War fighters. A specialist at the school discovered the remains' significance to Civil War history and turned them over to NCS.

COURT OF VETERANS APPEALS

Frank Q. Nebeker, the Director of the Office of Government Ethics in the Office of Personnel Management, has been named Chief Judge of the newly created Court of Veterans Appeals. Nebeker is a long-time Washington insider, having first gone to Washington on the staff of the Eisenhower administration. He served in the National Guard, worked with the Justice Department and served on the District of Columbia Court of Appeals from 1969 to 1987 when he was named by former President Reagan to head the ethics office.

This new court will have up to seven judges and will hear appeals from veterans seeking redress from decisions rendered by the Board of Veterans Appeals. Created by Public Law 100-687, enacted in November 1988, the court will operate independent of the Department of Veterans Affairs. In addition to specific factual questions emerging from VA claims, the panel may rule on VA regulations. It is expected that the Court of Veterans Appeals will be fully operational by September 1, 1989.

SUPPLEMENTAL SPENDING BILL

After nearly three months of posturing by both political parties in the House and Senate, the Fiscal Year 1989 "Dire Emergency Supplemental" finally cleared Congress on June 23 and was signed by the President on June 30.

In the end there were two sticky points left to be resolved between the two chambers: the House's insistence on added money to fight the war on drugs; and, the Senate's insistence on appropriations language earmarking money to "special projects" sought by some Senators. Faced with the likelihood of going home to their districts with no money for veterans programs in place, both chambers were able to quickly resolve their differences and free the funds so urgently needed for veterans' health care.

The revised package dropped a House plan to add \$821 million for anti-drug programs for this fiscal year. In exchange the Senate trimmed back some of their added spending proposals by \$75 million, with that money earmarked for the anti drug effort. The bill contains \$1.2 billion for the Department of Veterans Affairs, \$340 million of which is to cover a shortfall in medical care funds with the remainder going to compensation and pensions and other general operating functions.

Other items in the spending bill include an additional \$900 million for the student loan program, \$342 million to cover the cost of fighting last year's forest fires, \$423 million for foster care and adoption, \$225 million for food stamps, \$90 million for unemployment assistance, and \$100 million for refugee assistance.

COUNTY VETERANS AFFAIRS OFFICERS NEWS

On July 1, 1989, Mrs. Virginia Reynolds was appointed the Sumter County Veterans Affairs Officer. As all County Veterans Affairs Officers know, she has accepted the challenge which is to aid and assist this unique citizen, "The Veteran". We welcome Mrs. Reynolds and wish her well in her new endeavor.

Old Glory

In a speech delivered on June 14, 1915, Woodrow Wilson said, "The things that the flag stands for were created by the experiences of a great people. Everything that it stands for was written by their lives. The flag is the embodiment, not of sentiment, but of history."

As America celebrated the Fourth of July, there was serious concern about the recent Supreme Court decision to tolerate flag-burning under the rights of political dissent guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution. Initial reaction to both the ruling and an act of flag-burning is one of disgust. The American Flag symbolizes the United States of America and its freedoms and rights. History reminds us that Americans from all walks of life have fought and died to protect the "Red, White and Blue" and the ideals and principles for which it stands. Chief Justice Rehnquist perhaps said it best when he commented in the minority opinion that "The government may conscript men into the Armed Forces where they must fight and die for the flag, but the government may not prohibit the public burning of the banner under which they fight." Honorable and strong sentiments to be sure.

Today, there is a storm of protest all across the Nation. Our legislators in Congress are taking up the fight. Our President has joined the battle and patriotic Americans are rallying to "Old Glory".

Somehow, a way has to be found to protect our flag while at the same time insure that our Bill of Rights is kept in tact. It won't be easy, but neither were the many battles where Americans fought and died for the honor of "Old Glory".

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